ORE FACTS ABOUT CHANGES TO EDUCATION

Alberta
EDUCATION

February 24, 1994

INTRODUCTION

On February 24, 1994 the Minister of Education, Halvar Jonson, released government's three-year plan for education in Alberta. The plan provides further details on the restructuring of education announced by Mr. Jonson on January 18. The following are some detailed facts about the directions contained in the education business plan and are a supplement to the publication "Facts About Changes to Education" released in January of 1994.

AUDITS

Q1. What are "value for money" audits? And who would conduct them?

A1. "Value for Money" audits are formal examinations and reviews of schools and school boards to measure outcomes in relation to expenditures. The results will be judged against provincial standards.

Audits would be conducted throughout the year and culminate with the filing of the Audited Financial statement. One inspector would coordinate audits for each regional board. Schools would be audited on a four year cycle.

These audits replace the School Program Plan and monitoring functions of Regional Offices. Information from the audits would be included in Annual Reports to the public and would form part of a Regional School Board's Annual Report.

These audits would measure:
- efficiency of delivery of education and accounting of public funds,
- success of schools in maximizing student achievement including lower drop-out rates and higher course completion rates,
- success of specialized programs,
- innovative ideas that work and those that require modifications,
- success in addressing the educational needs of students from socio-economically disadvantaged areas,
- successful partnerships with schools and their communities, and
- communicating results and determining public satisfaction.

Q2. What "results" will be reported by schools, school boards and the province?

A2. There will now be increased and improved reporting of student achievement results and on the financial and administrative operation of schools, school boards and the education system as a whole. Albertans will be told how well the education system is achieving its objectives.

INCENTIVES

Q3. What do you mean when you say you will provide incentives to school boards to recognize student achievement?

A3. We want to recognize schools' achievement of high standards. Specific details of the plan are still being developed and teachers and the community will be asked for input on the plan.

Current funding systems are now based on the amount of service that the school provides and the intention is to provide some small recognition of student success in the grant structure.

For high schools one option being considered is granting the school $20 for each diploma examination passed and an additional $5 for each grade A achieved on the examinations.

For elementary and junior high schools, a consideration is an incentive based on the increase in the number of students meeting standards at grades 3, 6, and 9 over a number of years.

Q4. How will these incentives be provided and how much will they be?

A4. The way the incentives will be provided and their value will be decided following further consideration. However, the intent of the award is to recognize high performance and celebrate success.

Q5. Won't these incentives "penalize" those schools that are willing to accept disadvantaged students, slow-learners, etc., and encourage schools to focus on the high-achievers?

A5. We want all children to meet provincial standards but recognize that a very small proportion may not be able to do so. The criteria to receive an incentive will reflect this fact. Schools with a larger number of students with learning problems can still show growth in the number of students meeting standards and receive an award on that basis. Also, an important goal of these awards is to encourage the development of school programs to help disadvantaged children meet standards. The plan will not provide an incentive that might encourage excluding children from programs.

Q6. Will there be penalties for schools/school boards that didn't achieve gains ie. lose ground?

A6. No. Funding to schools that achieve below expectations will not be reduced. However, results from provincial testing will be available to school superintendents, school boards, principals, teachers, parents, and the community so that appropriate action can be taken immediately to remedy such a problem.

Teacher Certification

Q7. What is meant by "updating Teacher Certification Requirements"? Will this make teacher certification more difficult?

Certification as a teacher in Alberta takes place in two stages. The Interim Professional Teaching Certificate is issued when persons begin to teach. The Permanent Professional Teaching Certificate is issued after teachers have been in the classroom for two years. This process will continue.

In the past, the primary requirement for interim certification was the completion of a teacher preparation program and a recommendation for certification by a dean of a faculty of education. The primary requirement for permanent certification was the successful completion of two years of teaching and a recommendation by a superintendent of schools. These requirements will continue.

Government will now however outline the specific knowledge, skills and attributes (KSAs) expected of teachers when they have completed a teacher preparation program. Government also specify a second set of expectations (KSAs) for permanent certification.

Information about how well teachers are meeting expectations will be compiled and shared with the faculties of education and the education system.

The teacher certification process will then contribute to improving teacher preparation and professional development, and set minimum standards for the quality of teaching.

These objectives will be achieved without making the certification process more difficult.

Q8. Will you be assessing the qualifications/abilities of teachers already teaching on a regular basis?

A8. Teachers are evaluated on a regular basis. If they are found to be in need of improvement, both the teachers and the school jurisdictions are responsible to work to have these difficulties overcome. The Minister of Education has the authority, under the Practice Review of Teachers Regulation, to impose a variety of sanctions including revoking the teacher's certification if a situation requires it. This ongoing evaluation will continue.

ALBERTA EDUCATION

Q9. How is the Department of Education going to be downsized by 20%? What activities/functions/units will be eliminated?

A9. The Department of Education will be downsized in several ways, including:
- streamlining and organizational restructuring to increase efficiency but not necessarily eliminate functions.
- Phase out most functions of the Regional Offices of Education as provincially-appointed Superintendents are phased in.

Q10. How much money will be saved by the 20% reduction in Alberta Education? How many jobs will be lost and when? How many positions will remain after the downsizing?

A10. Overall, the Department of Education will be reduced by 170 positions over the period of 1992-93 to 1996-97. Of this number, 68 positions have already been eliminated, with another 53 scheduled for 1994-95, 43 in 1995-96 and five in 1996-97. This will leave the Department with a staff level approximately the same as in 1971-72 (about 686 including the staff at the Learning Resources Distribution Centre). Total savings from the reduction in the staffing of Department of Education will be $7.6 million.

Q11. After restructuring, what will be the role of Alberta Education? How will this differ from the current role?

A11. Alberta Education's budget will be reduced 20% by 1996/97, from 1992/93 levels, and the staff complement further downsized. Alberta Education's budget represents 2.8% of provincial spending on education, down from 3.5% in 1991/92 and 4.8% in 1986/87. By 1996/97 the department will have fewer staff than in 1971/72. Regional Offices will be phased out.

The department will continue to focus on planning, policy, curriculum standards, funding, compliance, auditing, evaluation, and communication. The department's role in service delivery will be reduced. Direct services will be provided only when provincially approved alternatives are not available, such as distance learning.

Definition of Basic Education

Q12. What does your new definition of basic education mean for schools in terms of what they provide now?

A12. The new directions for education will not require major changes for most schools. However, it will mean that all schools must review what they are doing and ensure that they are focusing on the important learning expectations identified for Alberta students.

Q13. Does your definition of basic education mean that courses such as second language programs, physical education and fine arts will continue to be provided to students?

A13. The first obligation of schools is to provide a solid core program. However, schools must also provide a variety of experiences so that students meet all of the learning expectations set out in the business plan.

Students will also be expected to appreciate the arts and know the basic requirements of an active, healthful lifestyle. They must also recognize the importance of accepting responsibility for their physical and emotional well-being. Consequently, schools will continue to offer fine arts, physical education and health courses.

Schools may also provide opportunity for students to acquire a second language. However, when the primary language of instruction is not English, students must be able to demonstrate competence in reading and writing English.

Q14. Who decides what courses fall within your definition of basic education?

A14. The province has indicated that all schools must provide a solid core program in language arts, mathematics, science and social studies.

Schools must also offer the programs of study in the instructional time specified by the province.

Each individual school will have flexibility to provide variation in programs, in consultation with parents and the community, to help students meet the learning expectations in the business plan.

Q15. What about courses outside of your definition - will they still be provided and who pays for them?

A15. Each school will have flexibility to provide variation in programs to help students acquire the required learning expectations. Schools, in consultation with parents and the community, may provide additional courses or programs to meet the needs of their students, such as second language programs or religious studies.

With the province providing 100% of the funding for education, all school jurisdictions will have equitable opportunity to provide variation in programs to meet the needs of students. These programs must be available to all students and schools cannot charge tuition fees.

Businesses, foundations and community groups may however fund additional courses that are available to all students. Schools, in consultation with parents and community, would make decisions about the terms and conditions of this funding.

Q16. Will school boards still be able to offer locally developed courses?

A16. Yes. If a school, in consultation with parents and the community, believes such programs are necessary for their students, they may be developed locally. As well, separate schools may provide locally developed religious studies consistent with their constitutional guarantees.

Q17. What courses will schools be required to offer?

A17. Schools will be required to offer the courses leading to meeting the requirements of a high school diploma.

Q18. Will existing programs of study remain in effect?

A18. Yes.

Q19. Will the requirement for 950 hours of instruction in grades 2 to 9 and 1000 hours in senior high school remain in effect?

A19. Yes.

Q20. How will the reduction in funding affect English as a Second Language (ESL) programs and services?

A20. The 1994/95 ESL grant will be $650 per funded student. School boards should be able to continue to offer quality programs and services. Alberta Education will continue to enhance ESL programming by working with school jurisdictions, other government departments and community agencies.

School Foundation Fund

Q21. What is the Alberta School Foundation Fund?

A21. The Alberta School Foundation Fund is a new fund for supporting education in Alberta's public and separate schools. It consists of a provincial contribution from the General Revenue Fund, revenues from the former SFPF levy and the local contributions from a uniform tax on residential, farm, and non-residential property.

Q22. How can we be assured that all funds collected through local education tax requisitions will be used for education?

A22. All the funds received from the local tax requisition will be used for public education. The establishment of the Alberta School Foundation Fund, where the funds collected through local education requisitions will be accounted for, assures that these funds will be used only for education in Alberta's public and separate schools. The monies received and expended from the fund will be accounted for and audited separately from the General Revenues of the province.

Q23. When will the new funding framework be finalized? How will it work?

A23. The new funding framework will be implemented in the 1995/96 school year. It will determine the funding school boards receive on a more equitable basis, recognizing student enrolment, differing requirements of students, and special characteristics of school jurisdictions such as sparsity of population and distances to be travelled by students.

Q24. Why was it necessary to remove school boards' access to the local tax base? Couldn't there have been a less drastic way to solve the problem of inequities among school jurisdictions.

A24. A serious equity problem in the financing of education has existed for many years, resulting in growing inequities in funding for schools and programs from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Full provincial funding of education will resolve the problem of fiscal inequity among school jurisdictions, allowing all Alberta students access to a quality education. The amount spent on the education of students will no longer be determined by the fiscal capacity of the jurisdiction in which they live. A variety of other solutions to the fiscal inequities have been proposed over the last six years, most of which were opposed by school boards.

Full funding also will ensure that one uniform education tax rate is established for residential and farmland and one for non-residential rate payers across the province for the support of education. This will end the great variations that currently exist in the equalized mill rates among school jurisdictions.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Q25. How do you plan to reduce duplication in curriculum development?

A25. The province will set curriculum and assessment standards for the core programs of language arts, mathematics, science and social studies as well as for the other learning expectations identified in the business plan. School boards can provide variations in programs, and may develop a limited number of local courses, to help students acquire specific learning expectations or address local needs. Consideration is being given to a limited amount of funding for administration and will therefore have reduced funds available for curriculum development. As well, local courses cannot duplicate provincial courses.

Also, increased efforts are being made to cooperate with other provinces to reduce duplication in preparation of curriculum.

Q26. What is the time-frame for implementing Career and Technology Studies?

A26. Interim programs in all CTS areas will be available by 1996-97. (Some of the advanced modules and standards may not be completed until the following year.)

Schools will decide which CTS courses they wish to offer to students. The cost of offering CTS will vary depending upon the specific programs that a school wishes to offer.

LOCAL AUTONOMY AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Q27. How will parents have a more meaningful role in decisions about education policies, programs and activities?

A27. School Councils will work more closely with the principal and teachers to set educational goals and objectives to meet the needs of the students and reflect the needs of the community. They will also be more involved in decisions about how education dollars are spent and how education is delivered at the local level.

School boards will have the responsibility to ensure that school councils are actively involved in the education of students and in the key decisions related to delivering that education.

Q28. What actual decision-making authority will be at the school level? How will you ensure that it happens?

A28. The principal will be responsible for more decisions at the school level. Site based management will allow principals to manage school resources - both financial and human, to meet the education needs of students. Principals will ensure school policies reflect the local school board and provincial Department of Education frameworks but will be responsible for how education is delivered in their school and how resources are spent.

Two approaches will ensure that this happens – school inspections and school system audits.

School boards and superintendents will ensure that principals receive more authority through the implementation of a site-based management structure.

Q29. What authority will parents have at the school level?

A29. Parents will continue to have the rights that they presently have in the School Act S.1(1) which in essence gives parents a right and a responsibility to make decisions respecting the education of their children.

As the funding system moves to eliminate boundaries within and between jurisdictions, parents will have more choice in deciding which school within the public or separate system their child attends.

As well, parents will have a right of access to more information about each school as the accountability of the principal is enhanced.

Q30. What will be the role of school councils and how is that different from their current role?

A30. The role of school councils in decision-making at the school level will be modified as new Regional School Divisions are formed.

School councils will have more authority to influence programs offered to support improved student results. School councils will have increased influence on the school budget and the distribution of those resources.

As well, as parents increasingly become more involved at the classroom level, and as school partners in the business community provide more direct assistance to the school, then the impact of the school council on the personnel of the school will also increase.

School Based Management

Q31. What is school-based budget and program decision making?

A31. Site-based management means schools will develop plans and budgets, in consultation with the School Council and the larger community, to guide how the funding they receive will be used.

Site-based management of schools results in decisions being made where education happens – in the school. It gives parents and teachers greater involvement in decisions affecting the education of students. It also means schools are more accountable for the achievement of their students. This is a major shifting of authority and responsibility from the school board to the school.

Student Testing

Q32. How will you reduce the duplication of student testing by school boards?

A32. Provincial achievement testing in grade 3 reading, writing and mathematics will increase from once every 4 years to once a year. Grade 6 and 9 mathematics, language arts, social studies and science achievement testing will also be increased to once a year. In addition, sample tests and standards will be developed for grades 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, and 8 in each core subject and made available to schools. This will reduce the need for local testing in these areas.

Q33. Why would you reduce this testing when you are talking about increased assessment and reporting?

A33. Alberta Education is in a position to provide comprehensive, reliable data on student outcomes measured against provincial standards. Schools will get better information at a lower cost to the taxpayer, than if each school district does its own testing and test development.

FRANCOPHONE GOVERNANCE

Q34. What are you going to increase in the areas of achievement tests and diploma exams? When?

A34. Currently, achievement tests in mathematics, language arts, social studies, and science are administered, once every four years, to grades 3, 6, and 9 students with one test per year. Beginning in June 1995, reading, writing and mathematics tests will be administered to grade 3 students and language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science tests to grades 6 and 9 students each year.

Beginning in January 1996, Mathematics 33 and Social Studies 33 diploma examinations will be introduced, in addition to the current Mathematics 30, Social Studies 30, English 30, English 33, Chemistry 30, Physics 30, Biology 30, Science 30, and Français 30 diploma exams.

Q35. What will be the cost of this increased testing and why are you doing it?

A35. The cost of increased testing will be approximately $1.5 million.

The increased achievement testing will provide schools and school districts with better information about how well their students are doing. The information is needed to inform the public whether students are meeting provincial standards. Also, it is the best way to reduce the amount of duplicate testing in the province and, thereby, save money.

The additional diploma exams in Mathematics 33 and Social Studies 33 are needed to ensure that our graduates, who are not enrolled in the 30-level diploma exam courses, are meeting high standards. At present, students enrolled in 33-level courses need to write only one diploma exam, English 33.

Q36. When will the new Francophone governance structure be put in place? How will it affect the rest of the school system? How will it work?

A36. The province will be divided into 7 Francophone education regions:

- Northwest Francophone Education Region 1 (Peace River)
- Northeast Francophone Education Region 2 (Fort McMurray)
- East Central Francophone Education Region 3 (St. Paul Medley)
- North Central Francophone Education Region 4 (Edmonton)
- Central Francophone Education Region 5 (Red Deer)
- South Central Francophone Education Region 6 (Calgary)
- Southern Francophone Education Region 7 (Lethbridge)

The following three regions will have, initially, Regional Authorities (school boards) composed of 5 members each:

- Region 2 will administer Ecole Heritage
- Region 3 will administer Ecole Voyageur in Medley, Ecole du Sommet in St. Paul and Ecole Francophone in Plamondon
- Region 4 will administer Ecole Maurice Lavallee, Ecole Notre Dame, Ecole Ste. Jeanne d'Arc in Edmonton and Ecole Citadelle in Legal.

The following will have, initially, Coordinating Councils composed of three members: Regions 2, 6 and 7. The Edmonton Regional Authority will act in the capacity of the Coordinating Council for Central Region 5.

These councils will facilitate the education in French of the children of Francophones by advocacy or by entering into agreements with boards of Regional Authorities respecting the purchase of services.

Names for the Coordinating Councils will be submitted to the Minister after February 21, 1994 and the names of the members of the Regional Authorities will be submitted to the Minister after March 3, 1994. Once appointed, the members of Regional Authorities will begin the task of organizing in order to take over the operation of their schools no later than the first day of classes for the 1994-95 school year. Subsequently, members of Regional Authorities will be elected at the same time as school board members are elected.

There will be no significant impact on the rest of the school system. All schools transferring to Regional Authorities will bring with them their assets and liabilities as well as a proportionate number of teachers to the number of students transferring.

Q37. How much will implementing Francophone governance cost and how do you justify it in a time of restraint?

A37. Francophone governance is implemented to meet the requirements of the Supreme Court judgement in Mahe vs. the Queen. The implementation of Francophone governance will cost $5.385 Million over a five year period. The federal government will fund 50% of the cost. The funding will permit the establishment and the organization of Regional Authorities and Coordinating Councils to implement Francophone governance.

FEES

Q38. What fees are going to be instituted by Alberta Education? How much will the fees be and when will they be implemented?

A38. In the 1994-95 school year Alberta Education is considering increasing several fees that are now collected and adding some as follows:

i) Teacher Certification:	From	To	New
•Foreign Countries	$100	$200	—
•In Canada but outside Alberta	$60	$150	—
•Alberta graduates	$20	$35	—
Statement of Standing Teacher	—	$15	Yes
•Duplicate Teaching Certificate	—	$20	Yes
•Permanent Certificate-Teacher	—	$25	Yes
•Interim Certificate-Teacher	—	$20	Yes
ii) Students:			
•Duplicate Diploma	$5	$10	—
•General Equivalency Diploma Exam Re-score:			
-Written	$15	$20	—
-Machine score	$5	$10	—
•Diploma Exam Re-score	$20	$25	—
•Diploma Exam Re-write	—	$20	Yes
•Late Application - Diploma Exams	—	$25	Yes
iii) Organizations/Public:			
•Mailing Labels - Schools	$25	$40	—
•Mailing Labels - School Jurisdictions	$15	$25	—
•Pupil/Teacher Lists	$1.50/pg	$2.00/pg	—
•School Histories	$30	$40	—
•Proof of Attendance	$14	$20	—
•Proof of Name and/of Age	—	$20	Yes

The increased fees and additional fees are being considered to help achieve cost recovery for the service provided.

Beginning in the 1995-96 fiscal year, Alberta Education intends to implement a "transcript fee" to help offset a portion of the cost of maintaining and up-grading the student record system. The expected fee is $10 per transcript.

Q39. Why introduce these fees?

A39. These fees are being introduced or increased to help recover the cost of providing various services to discourage abuse of the service and to bring the fees more in line with what other provinces are changing for the same or similar services.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

Q40. How would the Correspondence School section of the Alberta Distance Learning Centre be considered a Charter School? Why make it a Charter School? What would be the impact on service to students and schools?

A40. There are several features of the operation of the Correspondence School section of the Alberta Distance Learning Centre that could be considered consistent with the philosophy of charter schools:

- it provides an alternative to conventional delivery of schooling
- it has a province-wide mandate
- it could be governed through a Board, or through the Minister
- it could establish a "charter" that emphasizes at-a-distance learning.

As the specific criteria of charter schools become further defined, it will be determined whether the Correspondence School could indeed qualify as a charter school.

Q41. When will Charter School pilot projects be implemented and how will pilot projects be selected?

A41. Legislation providing for charter schools is now being drafted and will be introduced in the current session of the Legislature. Once the legislation is passed in the Legislative Assembly, the province will indicate how proposals for pilot schools can be submitted and the criteria for selection of pilot projects. All proposals must be consistent with the legislation. Pilot projects could be underway as early as September 1994.

TAXES

Q42. What will happen to local education taxes between now and 1997, will they go up or down?

A42. Provincial average net mill rates for education taxes will be phased in over the next three years. This means the education taxes will go down in nearly two thirds of the current school jurisdictions and will go up in the rest. By 1996/97 there will be one education tax rate for all equalized residential and farm properties in Alberta and another rate for all equalized non-residential properties, regardless of their location in the province. The provincial education mill rate in 1997 will be kept at , or below the 1993 average level.

Q43. What do you mean when you say Alberta Education will reduce direct delivery of programs and services? Who will deliver them?

A43. Alberta Education will reduce direct services to students and teachers except where no other alternatives are available. The distribution of learning resources will be reviewed to reflect a more efficient and effective distribution system.

School Boards in cooperation with their schools, communities and business will provide leadership in the direct delivery of services and programs to Alberta's students. Direct educational services will take on much more local focus with the needs of students paramount, allowing for decisions to be made where education happens.

ATTENDANCE BOUNDARIES

Q44. How will local attendance boundaries be removed?

A44. With full provincial funding of education, tuition agreements between jurisdictions will no longer be required, as school boards will primarily be funded on the basis of the number of students attending schools within their jurisdiction. This will remove the requirements for strict boundaries within and between jurisdictions. Students will be able to attend the school of their choice as long as there is the space and resources required to accommodate the student. Boundaries will only be required to determine which school board must provide access to a child.

Q45. What happens to local students who want to go to local schools once boundaries are removed?

A45. School boards will be able to designate attendance areas for each school to admit students on the basis of space or room and resources available. Student access to a school would be on a priority of residence as follows:

- in attendance area of the school
- elsewhere in the school board jurisdiction
- from other Alberta school jurisdictions
- from another province
- from another country

Role of Schools and School Boards

Q46. After all of the restructuring what will be the role of school boards? Of schools?

A46. The question of the specific roles of schools, school boards and Alberta Education will be the focus of comprehensive consultation in the coming months. The following is one possible framework to guide the discussion.

School Boards

- Provide the basic administrative structure for the jurisdiction.
- Prepare 3-year business plans. These will be required to ensure that administration and financial operations are well managed.
- Work jointly with Alberta Education to hire superintendents
- Evaluate the performance of superintendents and submit these to Alberta Education for review.
- Be accountable to the communities they serve for the performance of their system: program offerings, resources chosen, how well students do and at what costs. This includes establishment of clear measures of performance linked to provincial standards.
- Ensure that school/community involvement is occurring.
- Ensure that each student has access to an education program consistent with the requirements of the School Act regulations and the Program of Studies developed by the province.
- Establish policies regarding educational services, agreements, employment of staff, and transportation.
- Ensure adequate evaluation of systems, schools teachers and students.

Schools

- Establish educational performance standards linked to provincial standards and ensure that provincial achievement and performance standards are met.
- Develop and implement a school/community based management system which will:
  -provide opportunities for students to work closely with community and business to enhance learning opportunities,

-give the community a way to be involved but ensure that special interest groups do not take over the agenda for the education of students,
-report on educational results to the community,
-ensure parent/community satisfaction with results,
-evaluate teachers, and
-establish teaching approaches, eg., distance learning, integrated curriculum use of technology.

Reducing the Number of School Boards

Q47. When will school boards be amalgamated and how?

A47. The reduction in the number of school boards from 141 to about 60 will be completed prior to the next school board elections, in October of 1995. Since any amendments to electoral wards must be made six months prior to these elections, March 1, 1995 essentially becomes the deadline for regionalization and amalgamation of school boards.

The first approach to be used will be through voluntary regionalization of school boards. A number of school jurisdictions are now actively pursuing this option. Should these voluntary regionalizations not progress in a timely or appropriate fashion, the Minister of Education has the authority to impose amalgamations on school boards.

Separate school boards may voluntarily enter into a regional agreement with a public board however, amalgamations of separate school boards with public school boards will not be imposed. Separate school boards could however, be amalgamated with other separate boards.

Q48. Doesn't amalgamation reduce local control and involvement in the education system?

A48. No, school boards will retain key roles in the overall administration of education in a jurisdiction while increased decision-making at the school level will actually increase local control.

Schools will as much as possible make the decisions on how education dollars are spent.

School boards will be responsible for providing programs for their students in keeping with provincial requirements and student needs. This includes setting of priorities, making program decisions, and distribution of funds to schools. The employment of all employees, and the establishment of local policies within the broad policy framework established by the province will be a school board responsibility.

STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

Q49. After all of the changes, all of the funding reductions, what is the final effect on the student in Alberta classrooms?

A49. With the province providing 100% of the funding, there will be more equity in funding for all students regardless of where they live in the province. Also, the restructuring of education will reduce administrative costs, provincial and local, so the largest possible portion of funding will go directly into classrooms. This will ensure that all students have a greater opportunity to attain the learning expectations of Alberta's education system.

Q50. How will the proposed changes improve the education of students in our schools?

A50. The needs of Alberta students are changing as society and the world change. They must be well prepared to be competitive in the world of work and for life-long learning, at a cost the province can afford. Restructuring the education system will ensure adequate funding for basic education, resolve fiscal disparities among school jurisdictions, control costs and make the education system more accountable.

Several of the strategies will result directly in improved education for our students. Expanding the provincial achievement testing and diploma exam programs will improve student learning. Enhancing school-based decision making and increasing the involvement of parents and the community in schools will also improve the quality of education our students receive. Charter schools will enable innovations to be piloted, and if successful, adopted throughout the system as appropriate.

CONSULTATION

Q51. Will there be further consultation on the changes to the education system?

A51. Yes. MLA implementation committees will be talking with Albertans about the key changes in education. The Minister of Education has established five MLA committees to consult with Albertans on: reducing the number of school boards, the role of superintendents and school boards, the education funding structure, technology in education, and teacher certification. In addition, department officials will continue to talk formally and informally with stakeholders and the public as we proceed with the various strategies to restructure the education system.

Q52. What was done with all of the input received as part of the education roundtable and consultation process?

A52. The participants in the roundtable discussions held in October, 1993 provided valuable advice to government about changes which needed to be made in the education system. In addition to the formal roundtable report, the Minister received 17,000 submissions, petitions, and letters from over 31,000 Albertans in response to the roundtable workbook, Meeting the Challenge.

Government has responded to the views and concerns of Albertans. In the initial discussions about deficit reduction, all government departments were asked to reduce expenditures by 20%. Because education is the top priority for Albertans, education's reduction is 12.4%, the lowest of any government department reduction.

Feedback was used to restructure the education system according to five basic principles:
1) students must come first;
2) schools and school systems must be accountable to parents and taxpayers;
3) more authority must be provided to schools and parents;
4) administrative costs must be lowered; and
5) a fair system of funding must be implemented.

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